Plastic Bag Reduction Programs:
Bring Your Own Bag-MidCoast

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Agenda

• Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) – MidCoast
  • About us
  • Our proposal
  • Outreach activities

• Getting Started

• Using Sierra Club’s Grassroots Organizing Advice (to promote your cause)

• 5 Things We’ve Learned
Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) – MidCoast

- Group of about 20 Brunswick and Topsham residents
- Started in January 2015
- Meet monthly, in a library room, for 1½ hours

Mission: to educate about plastics in environment & pass ordinances on *disposable bags* & *Styrofoam*
Bag ordinances are gaining popularity

• Almost 200 U.S. jurisdictions have laws...
• And 24 countries

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Cameroon
- Canada (6 cities)
- Chile (1 city)
- China
- Denmark
- England (NEW)
- Ethiopia
- Germany
- Haiti
- India
- Ireland
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Northern Ireland
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Rwanda
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Wales
BYOB-MidCoast’s Proposal

1. 5-cent fee on single-use plastic and paper bags* at check-out at all retail stores

2. Ban Styrofoam for food and beverage packaging

*Why paper bags too?
BYOB–Outreach

- Staffed our educational booth and petition at 24 venues
- Collected 1,297 petition signatures
- Visited 42 retailers and 34 restaurants
  - Have 24 business supporters
- Done PPT presentations
BYOB–Outreach

- Our website: www.BringYourOwnBag.info
BYOB—Successful publicity

- BYOB Press “hits”: 3 Press Herald, 5 Times Record, 6 free press, 3 TV, 2 Radio & 5 Letters-to-the-Editor
Getting started

• Creating a grassroots group
  • If possible, find 1-3 to lead
  • Recruit others at a “friendly” event
  • Others will join over time...

• Meetings
  • Table tents and introductions
  • Plan structure for each meeting
  • Let people participate but keep to sched; end on time
  • Set ground rules for how things will be done in future
Sierra’s Grassroots Organizing Advice

1. Background research
2. Set specific goals
3. Assess strengths/weaknesses/needs
4. Strategies
5. Communications
   a. Slogan and Elevator speech
   b. Problem/solution
   c. Publicity
6. Tactics and Milestones
7. Resources
   a. Volunteers
   b. Budget
Background research

• We spent the first couple months doing research
• Resources to learn facts, see what others are doing
  • Sierra: http://www.sierraclub.org/massachusetts/plastic-bags-0
  • “NRCM Sustainable Maine Communities Toolkit”
    → Click on Reusable Bags
  • www.BringYourOwnBag.info

• All BYOB members asked to read the same 8 doc’s!
Set specific goals

Different ways to set up bag ordinances:

- Plastic bags and/or paper bags?
- Fee versus ban?
- All retail stores or just > 2% food sales?
- Exemptions?
  - Dry cleaners, newspapers, restaurants, SNAP recipients
- Phase-in periods?
Communications

- Slogan

Promoting reusable bags & containers in Midcoast Maine

- Elevator speech

Recent news reports are showing there are thousands of tons of trash—mostly plastic—in the ocean and most of these come from single-use disposable plastic items that get used once, then tossed out. We are proposing two measures that have been tried successfully in other communities: a 5-cent fee on single-use disposable bags at check-out and a ban on Styrofoam in food packaging and beverages.
## Communications, cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isn’t this government telling us what to do?</td>
<td>Plastic bags cost society about 17 cents because of litter, clogged sewers and jammed recycling equipment. This reflects their fair cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will low-income people pay for the bag fee?</td>
<td>We have raised $2,000 to pay for bags to give away ... We hope Hannaford’s will give out free reusable bags for 2 weeks as they did in Portland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s wrong with current system of recycling plastic bags at grocery stores?</td>
<td>Less than 12% get recycled nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I need the bags for cat litter, dog clean-up or lining my trashcans?</td>
<td>There are alternatives such as reusing bread bags or composting the litter... This doesn’t prevent you from buying bags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won’t this hurt small businesses?</td>
<td>No. They retain the 5-cent fee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three ways to get media attention

1. Write a Letter-to-the-Editor
2. Issue a press release (Check Contact page)
3. Hold a press conference
   - What is your announcement?
   - Alert the press
   - Set a rain location
   - Keep speakers to < 2 min’s
   - Think about visuals
     - Lobster gets attention!
     - Supporters stand behind!
   - Pass out a press packet
   - Borrow a podium
Resources: Volunteers

- Engaging your core members
  - Appreciate that people have different talents and try to find a way to make use of everyone
  - The more members participate, the more engaged they will be
  - Patience sometimes required
  - Take the time to express appreciation for individual contributions
Resources: Volunteers

Finding a role for everyone

- **Extroverts** → ran the booth, spoke with bus owners, attended schmoozing events
- **Homebodies** → entered data into computer
- **Writers** → wrote letters-to-the-editor
- **Research-types** → Researched specific issues and sources for reusable bags
- **Tech person** → Website, blog, Twitter and Facebook
- **Connectors** → told us about Sierra Club grant; got us church space; connected us to booth at Peace Fair; etc.
- **Creative types** → Designed lobster costume, a game for our booth, stickers for the Council hearing, moose logo
Resources: Volunteers

- Trick of trade: when people offer an idea, ask if they’ll take it on

Great idea! Would you be willing to do that?

Someone should research how much plastic bags cost society!
Resources: Budget

- **Uses of funds**
  - Website and hosting ($300 for 2 years)
  - Printed materials (petitions, handouts)
  - BDA and Chamber of Commerce dues
  - Reusable bags to give away
  - Postcards w/postage for mailings...

- **Sources of funds** – Sierra, NRCM, individuals
  - *Borrow items if you can (e.g. podiums, projectors)*

- **ROSC funnels donations so tax-deductible**
  (http://www.resourcesforsocialchange.org)
5 Things We’ve Learned

1. Sometimes it’s very lonely and discouraging
   - That’s why you want others to share the burden (and the glory)
   - As a leader of your group, you need to stay positive!

2. Put stuff out there; some of it will come back to you
   - Hard to predict what will yield, so try it all
     - *E.g. Support or important information from a surprising source*
   - Be ready for unexpected
     - *E.g. Interrupter at our press event*
   - Often, the minute you get discouraged is the moment things move forward
     - *There will be lots of up’s and down’s*
3. Tailor your arguments to your audience

- Consumers don’t want to be eating plastic
- Grandparents worried about the future of the planet for their grandchildren
- Fisherman might be disturbed to find plastic on their lines
- Taxpayers don’t like paying for litter pick-up and clogged storm drains from plastic bags
- Animal lovers are sickened by the sight of animals choking on plastic
- Boaters alarmed by garbage patches of plastic waste
5 Things We’ve Learned

4. The cohesiveness of your grassroots group is key!
   - Pick a consistent time to meet
   - Make sure meetings are a balance of information and personal affirmation. Don’t be afraid to have fun!
   - Remember everyone is a volunteer
   - Try to find a role for everyone and be positive

5. Build momentum by...
   - engaging more groups in community
   - keeping your visibility high, and
   - staying positive
Thank you!

Questions?